

Heavy duty laminates and innovative surfaces

Elena Colombarini is General Manager of Vetroresina LLC, the Vetroresina SpA plant in North America: she talked to us about their new automated production line and innovative products

Words Renato Antonini

Vetroresina Spa has been working in the North American market for many years, supplying laminates to RV manufacturers for their varied sandwich panel requirements. But alongside their conventional fibre glass laminates, the company is becoming ever more appreciated for their more advanced products.

Aboutcamp BtoB: When did Vetroresina Spa open its North America plant?

Elena Colombarini: We started exporting to the United

States in the late Nineties: the large American RV market was a very attractive prospect, with the potential to considerably grow our turnover. We were able to achieve excellent results in just a short time, and so we opened a branch in the United States in 2008.

Aboutcamp BtoB: How is your American branch organised?

Elena Colombarini: Vetroresina LLC is located in Greenville, South Carolina. We broke ground in 2005, and production started in 2008. The American plant has an area of nearly 36,000 sq.m., including production, warehouse space and offices. We employ a workforce of around 40 people.

Aboutcamp BtoB: How do you approach the American market, and what's your production capacity?

Elena Colombarini: 70% of Vetroresina LLC products go to the RV sector, but construction and goods vehicles - especially refrigerated cells - also make up a good share of turnover. We also operate in the marine products marketplace. 2021 was a big year for us, with the inauguration of our new production line, very similar to the one in our Italian plant. This has greatly expanded our production capacity, and we are now able to produce as much as 4 million sq.m. a year. The new production line is mostly automated, designed to make glass fibre laminates measuring up to 400 feet (120 m) in a discontinuous cycle. The panels are wound onto rolls for easy shipping by road. Although the new plant is designed primarily for making thin laminates, we have been able to adapt it to the production of heavy duty panels, up to 1/4", which are particularly suited for making the side panels of large RVs.

Aboutcamp BtoB: What is your current situation, and what do you have planned for the future?

Elena Colombarini: We're very pleased with what we've achieved in North America so far. We supply the top manufacturers in the RV market, and our products are also used by a number of sandwich panel manufacturers. Vetroresina LLC has a diversified product offering, and our production lines are very flexible. Talking with our clients is very important, and we aim to be more and more a solution provider for them. As for our future projects, we're currently developing a new product for use in RV roofs. And we're also making in-roads into other markets: we already have a good turnover in supplies to hunting and fishing home manufacturers, because our products are highly weather resistant, and can also be customised with a range of colours and finishes.





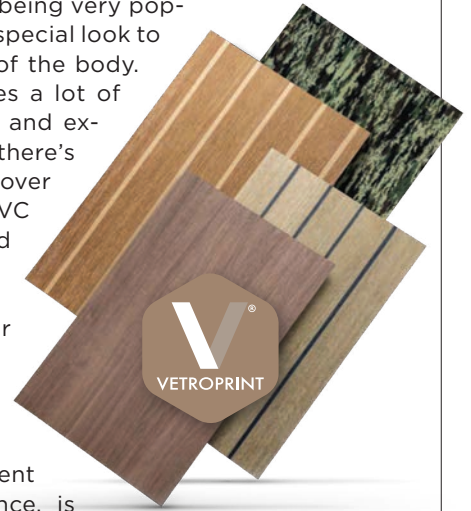
Vetrolite: heavy duty panels

The Vetrolite line consists of low density laminates, ideal for making heavy duty panels from 3.0 to 6.0 mm (1/4" / 6 mm panels are available on request). These panels enable manufacturers to do away with a wooden or thermoplastic underlayer, which are required to keep the surface even when using thinner panels. The glass fibre panel can be up to 14 m long, which covers the entire side of a large RV. This product reduces processing time and costs precisely because there is no need to glue it to an underlayer. And when you use these panels, the metal frame of the body is completely concealed. Doing away with a wooden underlayer also means that you have no joints between the plywood sections, and so there's no risk of the wood degrading over time. The thick gelcoat surface can be sanded and then painted. The colour can also be integrated into the gelcoat surface.



Vetroprint

Vetroprint laminates stand out for their very attractive finish. They are designed to be visible, and do away with the need for a cover layer or paint. A variety of effects are available: wood, stone, brick, carbon fibre - Vetroprint is available in any custom design, in a matte, high gloss or textured finish. Since it is available up to the 6 mm thickness, it can be used as the RV body floor, thanks also to its non-slip gelcoat finish. Vetroprint is widely used for interior walls, as well as being very popular for giving a special look to the outer walls of the body. The system saves a lot of processing time and expense because there's no need for a cover layer like a PVC floor or painted wall. Vetroprint outer wall panels last longer than walls decorated with adhesive graphics. Vetroprint has excellent weather resistance, is waterproof, washable and UV resistant, and is also easy to repair. It is an excellent substitute for conventional RV materials and finishes, and it's also gaining ground in construction and marine applications. It is also a popular choice for manufacturers of small towable hunting and fishing homes.



Vetroguardian

Designed for special applications, primarily in construction but also on RVs, Vetroguardian is a range of self-extinguishing laminates. The product is fire resistant, generates low toxicity fumes, and is self-extinguishing. It is available in a variety of thicknesses and a wide range of RAL colours. It can be finished glossy or matte, and is available both with gelcoat and without, for applications in which the look of the product is of no importance.



The Vetroresina LLC production site in Greenville, South Carolina